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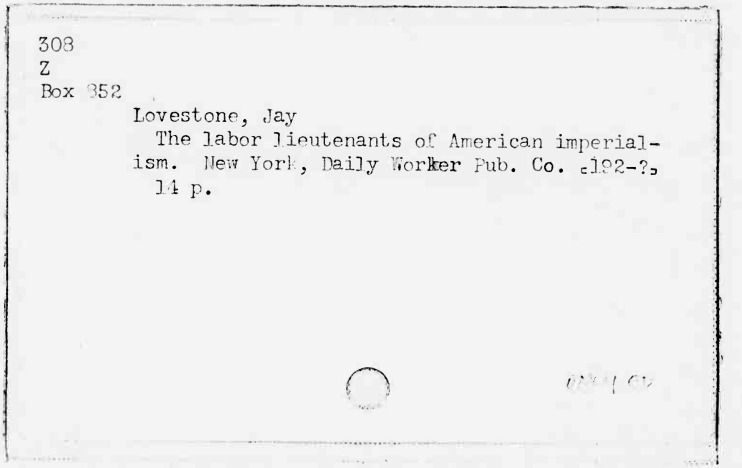

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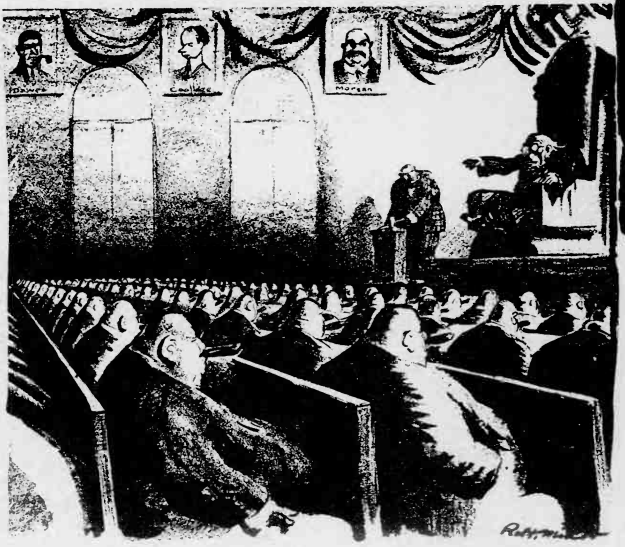

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The Labor Lieutenants of American Imperialism.

Politically the American labor movement is today more backward than that of any other of the big capitalist countries. Even the Yellow Amsterdam and Second Internationals are still too red, too militant for the American Federation of Labor.

In the main, the officialdom of the American trade union movement functions brazenly and aggressively as an agency of American imperialism at its worst. Our labor leaders are, with too few exceptions, primarily serving as labor lieutenants of American imperialism in the ranks of the organized and unorganized workers. On the whole, these trade union officials react swiftly and decisively to the needs and demands of the Yankee imperialists.

On the Job for Wall Street.

Let us cite two of the most recent and glaring instances illustrating our contentions and characterization. Everyone knows that the whole policy of the American Federation of Labor officialdom in inspiring and making possible the organization of the so-called Pan-American Federation of Labor was largely a game calculated to help hoodwink and mislead the working masses of the Latin-American countries so as to paralyze and stifle their possibilities and capacities to resist the plans of Wall Street for imperialist domination and exploitation of these territories. Yet, in the recent attempts of the Calles government of Mexico and the Mexican Regional Federation of Labor (CROM), an integral part of the Pan-American Federation of Labor, to beat back the efforts of the Catholic Church to maintain and extend its privileges, the American Federation of Labor hedged and did not support the CROM. In fact, it did worse. The last Convention of the American Federation of Labor appointed a committee of hardboiled union executives to investigate the whole question of relations between the Catholic Church and the Mexican government (and the CROM).

This was a slap in the face of the Mexican Federation of Labor. It is true the decision was, in a measure due to the pressure of Catholic influence in the American Federation of Labor. But this is a secondary cause. There is a more basic reason for this policy. The primary reason for this hostile action towards the Mexican Federation of Labor, for this staggering blow at the Pan-American Federation of Labor, is to be found in the fact that the interests of the American big bourgeoisie and the government which represents them demanded that under no circumstances should such an important section of American public opinion as that represented by the A. F. of L. be definitely mobilized on the side of the Mexican government in its struggle against Catholic reaction.

Such support of the Mexican government and such solidarity with Mexican labor might tend to tie the hands of, to weaken, the American government in any future strained relations, in any future conflict with Mexico over the oil or land questions. It is this attitude of the American government which basically determined the policy of the last convention of the American Federation of Labor towards the conflict between the Mexican government and the Mexican Federation of Labor on one side and the Catholic Church on the other side.

An equally gross instance of the dominant trade union officialdom being a pliant tool in the hands of the blackest capitalist interests is to be seen in the official A. F. of L. attitude towards the sending of an American Trade Union Delegation to the Soviet Union. A number of highly conservative prominent heads of some of the biggest unions in the country organized a delegation to visit the Soviet Union next summer and to report its findings to the American workers.

The Coolidge Administration and the biggest bourgeois interests on whose support it rests are hot and heavy against recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States. These capitalist reactionaries feel that such a delegation is dangerous to their campaign of slander and villification of the Soviet Union. Consequently, the blackest

and most corrupt forces of the trade union officialdom were mobilized by them to crush the plan to send this American delegation, composed of men opposed to Communism, to the Soviet Union. The State Department of the Coolidge Administration vetoed the idea of a labor delegation. In this instance, as in the case of Mexico and countless other instances of lesser import, the dominant trade union officialdom continued to be the tail to the kite of American imperialism.

Indeed, compared with many of the bureaucrats now infesting the American trade union movement, those labor leaders of whom Engels spoke as labor lieutenants of capital in the ranks of the English workers, were indomitable militants! This is going some! Yes. Altogether too often is it true that our American labor leaders pursue a policy far more reactionary than that pursued by some groups of powerful capitalists.

Setting the Pace for Reaction.

It is under such a leadership that our unions are tragically powerless. It is under such a leadership that at most three and a half out of more than twenty million industrial workers are organized. It is this leadership which is sabotaging all efforts to organize the unorganized, to build a Labor Party, and is working overtime to destroy all advocates of progressive measures, to expel the Communists and other militant workers from the trade unions. It is this trade union officialdom, conspicuously exemplified by such notorious corruptionists as John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers of America; Matthew Woll, President of the Photo Engravers' Union and Major Berry, President of the International Pressmen's Union that is today most bitterly attacking the Communists and progressives in the American trade union movement.

What type of men is to be found in the official American trade union movement? How close are they to the rank and file of their unions? What is the attitude of these officers to the workers? To the employers? To the government? What are their salaries? What are their interests in life? What are they after?

In the answer to these and similar questions we will find an accurate, though uninspiring picture of an important phase of the American labor movement. Here we will find a cancer on the very body politic of the American working class.

The Officials and the Workers.

The great majority of the American trade union officials, from the petty business agent up to the "Grand International President", feels contempt for the workers whom they consider below them. These labor lieutenants of Wall Street feel themselves closer to the employers than to the workers. Especially is this true when they hold high positions in the trade union movement.

These trade union officers are now American Labor's window on Wall Street. They model the bourgeois politicians. They ape the gang leader in their treatment of the workers in their organizations making complaints or seeking redress of grievances. These bureaucrats are developing a most destructive cynicism in their attitude towards their members and in their attitude towards their own work in the labor movement.

They live comfortably, get very high wages and consequently develop a barrier, oftentimes insurmountable between themselves and the rank and file of the workers. The average lower trade union officer has an income ranging from two to three hundred percent greater than the workers of the craft in which the union he leads is found. In the stronger unions the local business agents, handling mainly immediate shop grievances and regulating on the whole the every day relations between employer and worker, average a minimum of sixty to seventy dollars weekly. Here we are speaking of the business agent of the unions of skilled workers. Yet, the average skilled worker, counting the loss of wages through irregularity of employment, does not, through the year, make more than about thirty-five dollars weekly.

Our High-Priced Trade Union Leadership.

The salaries of the presidents—international presidents as they are called—of the American trade unions, range from three to twenty-five thousand dollars plus all kinds of emoluments annually. In the well-organized crafts the salaries of the international presidents of the unions run from seventy-five hundred to ten thousand dollars and over per year.

The high priced bureaucrats give two main arguments for their exorbitant wage demands upon the unions they run and ruin. These are:

1. The trade union officer sells his labor power just as well and as much as any worker does. Labor power is a commodity. The trade union leaders are highly skilled individuals. They place their commodity for sale in the labor market. The union must bid against the employers for the purchase of this commodity, for the hiring of these "able" men. Naturally, when bid meets bid—when a labor union must compete against an employer or groups of employers for the "services" of this highly skilled gentry, the price of this commodity goes up. Ergo: the salaries of the trade union officers of the powerful unions go sky-rocketing.

Here is to be found a basic cause for the frequency with which trade union leaders are often simultaneously subsidized by the capitalists and paid by the unions for supposed services rendered. Only a few months ago it was shown that Frank Farrington, President of District 12, Illinois, of the United Mine Workers of America, was on the pay roll of the Peabody Coal Company, one of the biggest and most vicious coal operators in the country, at the salary of twenty-five thousand dollars a year while he was drawing pay from the miners' union.

Labor officials defeated in union elections often get on the payroll of a corporation in the industry of the union which repudiated them. But the labor movement is on the whole so backward, so deficient in class consciousness, that it seldom attaches odium to such going over to the capitalist

class under these circumstances. A trade union official of this type will often openly admit that he is "in it for what he can get out of it."

2. The second reason for the big salaries exacted by the labor lieutenants from the trade unions is that the labor union representative must live and feel on a parity with the men, with the wealthy employers, "across the table" in negotiations. These leaders maintain that in order to get the best contracts for their unions with the bosses they must live on a swell scale, live in the same hotels with the employers and dress and act like them in every other way possible. These union officials consistently exhibit a strong desire to be on the best of personal terms with the exploiters. They consider it an achievement and a significant mark of their skill as labor leaders if they can be on such intimate terms with the bosses as to call them by their first names.

Of course, the international presidents usually consider the "across the table" method as the most effective and only way of conducting a struggle against the capitalists. They detest action by the workers themselves, such as effective mass picketing, demonstrations and huge protests against government strike breaking and intolerable working and living conditions. It must be said however, that the high priced labor leaders of some of the unions sometimes resort to hiring professional gangsters to beat up scabs. The use of professional gangsters has been resorted to with too great frequency to exterminate militants in the trade unions, to conduct a savage warfare of violence against Communists. This practice is especially characteristic of certain so-called Socialist trade union officials in some of the needle trades unions.

Labor Leadership on the Auction Block.

Let me present an illuminating case which will illustrate the characteristics and attitude of the aristocrats among the high-priced leaders of the American trade union movement. At the last convention of the Brotherhood of

Locomotive Engineers, one of the oldest and most powerful trade unions in the United States, William B. Prenter, now Grand International President of this organization, in discussing the report of the Committee on Salaries, protested against the recommendation that his salary be limited to twenty-five thousand dollars a year and said:

"You have elected me for a term of three years. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers Co-operative National Bank in Cleveland has elected me their first Vice-President and Cashier. I am holding various positions in your financial interests. I am the Secretary-Treasurer of your Holding Company, a Brotherhood Corporation. I am the Secretary-Treasurer of your Investment Company, a corporation controlled by the Brotherhoods and owned by the stockholders of the general public and others. I am the President of your Nottingham Savings Bank, owned and controlled by the Holding Company. I am a Director and Vice-President of your Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers Trust Company of New York. I am the Vice-President of the Locomotive Engineers National Bank of Boston, Massachusetts, owned by the Brotherhood. I am a Director and sit on the Executive Board of the Empire Trust Company. I am a Trustee for the interests of the Investment Company, the Holding Company, and the Brotherhood, in all your other activities, in the Transportation Brotherhood Bank of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the bank in Birmingham, Alabama.

"And I would much prefer that you would designate what you want to pay me as treasurer for your Brotherhood, your Insurance and Pension Department, and let me make whatever arrangements I want for the duties that I am required to perform in connection with your other interests.

"The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers Co-operative National Bank has several Vice-Presidents with salaries ranging from six to ten thousand dollars and you expect me to go into that bank and resume the responsibility of its Cashier and on a salary of five thousand dollars a year.

"I will not do it. If I am not worth more than that to these institutions, they haven't got the right man and I am not wedded to the job."

Mr. Prenter objected to being paid a flat salary of twenty-five thousand dollars a year. He wanted to be paid handsomely for all the above enumerated titles, individually and separately. When he was asked how he found the time to do all this work he answered: "Mostly by working twenty-four hours a day." Prenter continued:

"You fellows expect me to sit across the table from fellows making twenty-five thousand dollars a year. It can't be done unless I get enough money to command their respect and keep my own self-respect . . . . If I'm good enough to represent your interests with twenty-five thousand dollars a year men, then I am good enough to make as near that sum as the union can afford."

A delegate, Ferguson by name, with a sense of humor and with some sense of duty to his organization then said:

"Brother Prenter no doubt is worth maybe to this organization a hundred thousand dollars a year, but when he gets up there and tells us his duties and responsibilities and the different offices he holds, it seems to me that Brother Prenter is overtaxed with responsibilities. He has been elected or has been appointed to more positions than it is humanly possible for one man to fill . . . . When you stop to think about, what are you paying these brothers (grand officers) today? If you look at it in that light—I haven't figured it up, but it is in the neighborhood of thirty dollars a day. That is a pretty good salary, when you stop to consider what the men are receiving who are paying for it . . . .".

But then a delegate, by the name of Burke, rose to the defense of Prenter by saying:

"You certainly are not going to make your chief executive sit across the table from men in the railroad or-

ganizations who are getting a higher salary? You cercertainly are not going to take the pep right out of your Assistant Grand chief by making him sit across the table from a man who is getting three or four thousand dollars more a year? Certainly you don't mean that?" . . . .

Then Mr. Stone, (now deceased) who was formerly Grand Chief, spoke up and addressed the delegates:

"You want the highest pay in the world for yourselves and you are the cheapest lot of men in the world to work for when it comes down to salaries. You put these men across the table against fifty thousand dollar, seventy-five thousand dollar and a hundred thousand dollar a year men to represent what? To represent you. You expect them to get results and you expect them to win out. You put them up against the keenest, shrewdest and brainiest lot of men in the world who draw the best salaries in the world."

This talk got under the skin of a rank and file delegate, Miehlke, who leaped to his feet and declared:

"I would like to see every Grand Officer we have paid a decent salary, but I can't see anything in the argument produced by you, Brothers, when you talk about being paid $15,000 or $25,000 and talking across the table to men getting $100,000 or $125,000. I have been paid $150 (monthly) and in some cases less, the last twenty-five years, and I have been talking across the table to superintendents who were getting three times as much as I was. If you are going to raise the salaries of the Grand Officers so they can talk across the table with some Vice-Presidents, let's do that for the rank and file back home too."

Of course to comply with the last wish of this rank and file delegate would mean that the Grand Officers would have to fight. This is not in their line.

We have quoted at length from the confidential minutes of the last convention of the Brotherhood of Locomotive

Engineers in order to give an accurate picture of the type of leadership now dominating some of the strongest trade unions in America.

Let us proceed to tabulate the salaries of the officers of some of leading trade unions of the United States:

Name of Trade Union	Officers and Salaries	
Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers	President	$25,000
	First Vice-Pres.	15,000
	Grand Chief Engineer	13,000
American Federation of Musicians	President	12,000
	Secretary	7,500
Painters, Paper-hangers and Interior Decorators	President	6,000
	Secretary	6,000
Carpenters and Joiners	President	7,500
Bricklayers and Masons	President	10,000
	Secretary	10,000
Structural Iron Workers	President	7,500
	Secretary	6,000
Order of Railway Conductors	President	12,000
	Secretary	8,000
	Vice-Presidents (7)	6,000
	Sr. Vice-President	8,000
Stage Employees	President	6,000
Maintenance of Way Men (Railroads)	President	14,000
	Secretary	9,000
Locomotive Firemen	President	12,000
	Secretary	10,000
Street Car Railway Men	President	6,000
Railroad Trainmen	President	14,000

Railway Clerks	President	$10,000
Machinists	President	7,500
	Secretary	6,500
Railway Carmen	President	7,400
Teamsters and Truckdrivers	President	15,000
	Secretary	15,000
	Auditor	15,000
	Vice-Presidents (7)	10,000
	Trustees (3)	10,000
	Organizers	10,000
Barbers	President	7,000
United Mine Workers	President	12,000
	Vice-President	9,000
Electrical Workers	President	7,000
	Secretary	6,500

We must also reckon with the fact that some of these trade union officials get as high as $19 a day for living expenses when they are travelling. Some of them are allowed $5.00 a day in addition to their salary for incidental expenses throughout the year. Many of them are corrupt and make plenty of money through betraying the workers in their struggles. Many of them draw additional salaries as officers of labor banks and trade union financial institutions. A large number of them own substantial blocs of stock in big corporations.

What Price Labor Leaders?

The American trade unionists are paying annually a hundred million dollars to their organizations. Most of this huge sum goes towards the payment of wages and salaries of officers. At best the organized workers receive in return, nowadays, is the maintenance of the status-quo despite favorable economic conditions for the millions of skilled workers. For some unions even this cannot be said about the leadership.

A number of the unions have their executive committees divided into various departments. The Brotherhood of

Locomotive Engineers, for instance, has an Insurance and Pension Department, an Investment Department, and the lowest of the department is the Labor, or Trade Union, Department. This in one of the most powerful American labor unions.

The workers in the aristocracy of labor, the highly skilled workers, are getting a few crumbs from the wealth-laden tables of the American imperialists now enjoying world hegemony. The greatest beneficiaries of American imperialism in the ranks of the labor organizations are the International officers of the unions of highly skilled workers, of the organizations of the aristocracy of the American working class. There is a great gap between the imperialist prowess of the United States and the Imperialist strength of the other leading capitalist national groups. There is likewise a gap between the extent to which the trade union bureaucracy of some of the less powerful capitalist countries has been corrupted and the debauching of the reactionary high-trade union officialdom of the American trade union movement. There is a positive relationship between these gaps.

But let no one make the mistake of viewing as one homogeneous mass the entire American labor aristocracy. Let no one even make the mistake of viewing as a homogeneous group the entire American trade union officialdom. There are bases for serious differentiations and divisions, even in the ranks of the trade union officialdom. The bases for these differences, of course, are deeply rooted in the economic conditions of the country—specifically in the economic status of the particular industry in which the union happens to be found, of the extent of skill of the workers unionized, etc.

The American Communists correctly view this corruption of trade union officialdom and the slight benefits to the several million of skilled workers, both as a result of the strength of Yankee imperialism today, only as a temporary condition. The American Communists are also beginning to react in a realistic manner to the differences existing and potential not only in the American working class as a whole but also in the various sections of the working class.

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